



# Picatinny School News

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## Don't Forget!

Check out [www.Tutor.com/military](http://www.Tutor.com/military) for homework help! At Tutor.com, you get a professional online tutor whenever you need help. You work one-to-one with your tutor in our online classroom on your specific homework problem until it's done. This is a **FREE** service to military family members!



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## How to Take Better Notes

Rule number one: There are no rules! Kids' minds work in different ways, and their notes should reflect those differences. You can encourage her to think about how she thinks. Set her on the right course with these four guiding principles:

**Principle 1: Your Language and Attitude Matters**-Let your child know that it's okay to do things differently. Take an approach that acknowledges the frustration that many kids feel about school and note taking. Try saying, "Taking notes is hard sometimes. And class can be boring. Let's figure out a way to play this game." Let him know that all kids take notes differently.

**Principle 2: Embrace Coping Mechanisms**-Often, positive strategies that children develop are discounted as "coping mechanisms." This can be true for note taking. Take the time to identify your child's note-taking coping

mechanism and figure out what unique skills it represents. Ask your child how she "gets by in class." Ask her what tricks she uses to get the information down. Try to figure out what these tricks say about the type of learner your child is. If she's drawing on her notes, often that means she's a visual learner. Daydreaming while still absorbing the information means that she's an auditory learner. Help her to see that these coping mechanisms can be viewed positively.

**Principle 3: Talk About Form, Content, and Notations**-This is the most important discussion you will have with your child and it's one that you should continue to have throughout your child's school career. There are five different note-taking structures, but your child might already have one that is all his own. Talk with your child about whether or not the Roman numeral system works

for him. Ask whether or not he has a special notation system like abbreviation or color-coding. Lastly, ask if he has a specific focus on details, themes, or connections that is helpful for remembering information. It's okay if your child gives you the usual, "I don't know" or "Nothing." What matters is that you've taken the first step in making your child's thoughts and ideas central to the process of individualizing his notes.

**Principle 4: Understand Process**-Empowering your child to individualize her notes won't happen overnight. Let your child know that better note taking will develop over time. Tell her that it's okay if something doesn't work -- she'll learn from the experience and can try something new. If you stick to that process of trial and error, over the course of a few weeks or a month you will see improvement.

## Get Involved at Your Child's School!

Stumped for what to do at your child's school? Try the following:

- ~Join the PTA.
- ~Bake for a bake sale, or help plan one.
- ~Act as a lunchroom or playground monitor.
- ~Chaperone field trips or any events that take place away from school.

~Help plan and chaperone dances, proms, or graduation ceremonies.

~Act as a classroom helper, or volunteer in the computer lab.

~Organize or assist with a club or special interest group.

~Help out with the gym or sports activities.

~Help prepare press releases or write grant applications.

~Work in the library.

~Sew costumes or build sets for theatrical productions.

~Help out with any arts, crafts, or design projects.

~When all ideas abandon you, ask your child's teacher!



## Homemade Glue and Paste Recipes

The following glue and paste recipes use a variety of ingredients and methods. Choose the one that best suits your project. For variety, add food coloring before using. Store all glues and pastes in airtight containers in the refrigerator.

### Glue

#### Materials

3/4 cup water  
2 tablespoons corn syrup  
1 teaspoon white vinegar  
Small saucepan  
Small bowl  
2 tablespoons cornstarch  
3/4 cup cold water

#### Directions

Mix water, corn syrup, and vinegar in saucepan.  
Bring to a full, rolling boil.  
In bowl, mix cornstarch with cold water.

Add this mixture slowly to the hot mixture, stirring constantly until the mixture returns to a boil.

Boil for 1 minute, then remove from heat.

When cooled, pour into another container and let stand overnight before using.

### Homemade Paste

#### Materials

1/2 cup flour  
Cold water  
Saucepan  
Food coloring (optional)

#### Directions

Add cold water to flour until mixture is as thick as cream.  
Simmer and stir in saucepan for 5 minutes.

Add a few drops of food coloring, if desired.

This wet, messy paste takes a while to dry.

### Papier-Mache Paste

#### Materials

1 cup water  
1/4 cup flour  
5 cups lightly boiling water  
Large saucepan

#### Directions

Mix flour into 1 cup water until mixture is thin and runny.  
Stir this mixture into lightly boiling water.  
Gently boil and stir 2-3 minutes.  
Cool before using.  
Add a pinch of salt; stir.



## Is Your Child Ready to Be Home Alone?

### Who's Home Alone?

Many working parents wonder if they should leave their child home alone while they zip off to a client meeting or put in a regular day at the office. But when is a child actually ready for such a coming of age ritual?

A recent U.S. Census report shows 7 million of the nation's 38 million children ages 5 to 14 are left home alone regularly. The data show:

- ☐ 600,000 5- to 8-year-olds fend for themselves.
- ☐ 3.4 million children are under the care of siblings.
- ☐ The average time "home alone" is 6 hours per week.
- ☐ Higher-income parents are more likely to leave kids unsupervised.

### How to Know When They're Ready

A "home alone" experience handled properly -- not out of desperation for lack of childcare -- can boost a child's sense of independence and self-esteem. The key is being able to take cues from kids in order to gauge their readiness.

### How They Do It

- ☐ One mom always lets a neighbor know when her son is going to be home alone.
- ☐ The son never stays alone after dark

(his choice).

- ☐ He's never left in charge of his younger sister.
- ☐ He can't answer the door, or sit in the kitchen where he could be seen through the window by a prowler trying to gain entry.
- ☐ Mom did cell phone "training," watching him dial her number to make sure he knew it.

### Expert Advice to Help Parents and Kids Feel Safe

It's not easy to leave your kids home alone for the first time. These suggestions from Linda Braun, executive director of Families First Parenting Programs, will help you take the big step.

**Weigh three factors:** the child's personality, your personality, and your neighborhood. Is your child trustworthy, independent, secure, and sensible? Where do you fall on the anxiety spectrum? If you're nervous, you'll transmit that feeling to your child. Finally, consider whether you have reliable neighbors whom your child could turn to for help in an emergency.

**Think of age 10 or 11 as a good age to start,** although temperament trumps chronological age. You may have a 9-year-old who is mature enough to be

home alone, or a 12-year-old who's not. Braun believes age 11 is better than 10 because "there is a big difference between the maturity of a fourth grader and a fifth grader. The fifth grader is really beginning to model the behavior of sixth and seventh graders."

**Take cues from kids.** She advises parents to wait for children to propose the idea: Braun cautions that if *you* do, explore gently: "I was thinking that sometimes when I have to take your sister to ballet, you're in the middle of something. Would you ever like to stay here while I drop her off?"

**Have some "what if" chats.** What if someone knocked at the door? What would you do if you smelled smoke? What if a friend calls and wants to come over? Hearing how your child might handle these scenarios will help you get a clearer sense of whether he or she should be left alone.

**Establish "house rules."** Children should know what to tell callers: "Mom's not available" is certainly better than "no one's home right now." They should also know how to beep or call a parent, which household appliances are okay to use, and which ones are off limits.

# Getting Kids to Clean Their Rooms

## Make it easy

Cleaning is not an intuitive skill. Nobody is born knowing how to attack a messy room and turn it to serenity. Few of us can effectively wield a broom, dust pan, or dust rag without a lesson or two—and a lot of practice. Making beds takes time. Here are some suggestions for making clean bedrooms possible, and defusing the dust bombs.

Teach your child *how* to clean by incorporating him into your own cleaning.

Cleaning can be a lonely task, and for the social child, it may feel like a punishment instead of a way to contribute to the family. Become the clean team—make the jobs go faster by working together. Your child helps you clean your areas of responsibility, you help him with his room. Be clear about what you mean by “a clean room.”

## Clean? What Do You Mean?

We all know what a truly clean room looks like, but how do you get from here to there? How much of it is your child's responsibility? “Go clean your room” could mean tossing things in the closet until company has gone. It could mean clearing the toys from the floor and sorting game pieces into their boxes, throwing the dirty clothes in the hamper and pulling up the bedspread. It could mean changing the bed, dusting, and vacuuming. It could mean polishing

the windows and mirror until they sparkle. Below, the process of cleaning a filthy bedroom is broken into small, manageable chunks. You can use



these suggestions to create an individualized bedroom chore list for family member.

## Behave Yourself!

When it comes to clean bedrooms, keep your expectations *very* low. Few kids have clean rooms. They like them dirty, it's the only place where they have control over their environment. This may be where something needs to give, and that something may be you. When you make chore lists for your child, always take your child's age and development into consideration. Remember, your expectations will change as your child matures.

Using the list will help you define your expectations. It will help your child organize his time and remember his tasks. You'll have an easy, stress-reduced way to check if things have been done. Keep the list small. Better to have too few things on the list than too many.

Here are two quick hints: Separate the job into straightening and cleaning, and don't clean before you've straightened, you'll just make yourself frustrated; and, a filthy room is like an archaeological dig. You've gotta approach it in layers.

## Break it down

Here's the ideal order to get from disaster to clean in as short a time as possible:

*Tackle the clothes first.* Fold the clean ones or put them on hangers, and put them away in an organized fashion. Put the dirty clothes in the hamper. Put all shoes (neatly) in the closet. Once the clothes are out of the way, you may be able to see a patch or two of carpet.

*Clear the garbage and clutter.* Return all dirty dishes to the kitchen, and wash them. Bring in a large plastic trash can

bag for the trash. Don't forget to empty the wastepaper basket.

*Strip the bed* and put the sheets and pillowcases in the hamper. Remake the bed with clean sheets.

*Start laundry load number one*, if you have in-house machines.

*Put away the toys* and the fragments of toys (oh, those puzzle pieces!).

*Put away all books, tapes, CDs, videos, computer programs.* Library books go in a pile near the door ready to be returned. Tapes, CDs, and so on, all need to be in their *proper* boxes, and *then* put away. You *won't* get to it later.

*Clear the desk.* Organize the desk so that homework and books are accessible. Throw away old clutter and scrap paper. (You may need to empty that wastepaper basket again.) Stuff the (now full) trash can bag in the kitchen garbage can or, if you're really ambitious, take it out to the trash cans or dumpster.

*Now we make the shift between straightening and cleaning!* Get your dusting supplies handy! Straighten and dust surfaces (dresser, bedside table, vanity, shelves, and so on). You do this surface by surface—clear the surface of objects, dust, and return objects neatly. Starting to look pretty good, huh?

*Clean the floor.* Sweep, or move furniture aside and vacuum. Don't forget to vacuum the dust from under the bed!

*It's wall time!* De-web the ceiling and corners with a broom covered with your dust rag or the vacuum cleaner. Scrub the bad spots off walls with spray and a rag. Make sure all posters are still securely attached.

Hot dog! It's a clean room!

## School Calendars

### Dennis B. O'Brien

3/1—Talent Show  
3/7—PTA Meeting 7pm  
3/13—Early Dismissal: Staff Development  
3/14—5th Grade Family Fun Night  
3/15—St. Patty's Day Bingo/  
Wear Green Day  
3/25-3/29—Spring Break: No School



### Copeland Middle School

3/4—PTA Meeting 7pm  
3/5-3/8—Spring Book Fair  
3/8—Progress Reports distributed  
3/13—Early Dismissal: Staff Development  
3/15—Theatre Production  
3/25-3/29—Spring Break: No School

### Morris Knolls High School

3/5-3/7—HSPA Testing (11th Graders)  
3/8—Mid-Quarter of 3rd Marking Period  
3/13—Early Dismissal: Staff Development  
3/14-3/16—Spring Musical 7pm  
3/19—College Planning Night 7pm  
3/21—Project Graduation Fashion Show  
3/25-3/29—Spring Break: No School



## U.S. Army Child, Youth & School Services



Connecting Families, Schools & Communities

The School Liaison Officer works in conjunction with the Child and Youth Services Division and the local school community to address educational issues involving military children. Through partnering with the local and military community, the School Liaison Officer acts as a communication link between the installation and the surrounding school districts.

For more information, contact your School Liaison Officer.

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Blacksmith Road  
Picatinny Arsenal, NJ 07806  
Phone: (973) 724-7892  
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## Top 10 Things Colleges Look for in High School Students

What are college admissions officers looking for as they review your child's application? The admissions process varies and can be subjective to some degree, but here are 10 things that could help your child stand out and score acceptance letters from his or her favorite schools.

**A Challenging High School Curriculum-** A transcript that reflects the student takes on challenges can put her a step ahead. Academically successful students should include several honors and Advanced Placement classes.

**Strong Grades and an Upward Trend-** Admissions officers value grades that represent strong effort. Grades should show an upward trend over the years. However, slightly lower grades in a rigorous program are preferred to all A's in less challenging coursework.

**Solid Scores on Standardized Tests-** Scores on the SATs and ACTs carry considerable weight in the college admissions



process. Scores should ideally be consistent with high school performance.

**Quality Involvement in Activities-** Passionate involvement in a few activities — and a demonstration of leadership and initiative in those activities — can only help a student. Depth, not breadth, of experience is most important.

**A Record of Community Service-** Community service activities serve as evidence of a student being a "contributor." Volunteer activities should demonstrate concern for other people and a global view.

**Work or Out-of-School Experiences-** Jobs, summer programs, and other out-of-school activities can demonstrate a student's sense of responsibility, dedication, and personal development in areas of interest. Meaningful use of free time can show maturity.

**A Well-Written Essay-** A strong college essay provides insight into the student's unique personality, values, and goals. The application essay should be thoughtful and highly personal. It should demonstrate careful and well-constructed writing.

**Positive Recommendations from School Personnel-** Hopefully the student's letters of recommendation from teachers and guidance counselors give evidence of integrity, special skills, and positive character traits. Students should request recommendations from teachers who respect their work in an academic discipline.

**Additional Recommendations from Adults Who Know the Student Well-** Supplementary recommendations by adults who have had significant direct contact with the student can also bolster a college application. For example, letters from coaches or supervisors in long-term work or volunteer activities are valuable. However, recommendations from casual acquaintances or family.

**Other Special Attributes or Awards-** Don't overlook anything special that makes the student stand out from the rest of the applicants! Include honors, awards, evidence of unusual talent or experience, or anything else that makes the student unique. Overall, colleges are seeking students who will be active contributing members of the student body.